

PHOTO ENGRAVERS ORDER A WALKOUT ON NEWSPAPERS

Union Acts After Ultimatum.
Given in Midst of Wage
Negotiations, Is Rejected.

Photo Engravers' Union No. 1 has ordered a strike of the 200 members employed in New York newspaper plants, and such of the other 1,800 members as are working commercial shops making cuts for newspapers. The strike was scheduled to begin this morning. It follows an ultimatum given to the newspaper publishers in the midst of negotiations over a new wage scale in place of an agreement expiring last midnight.

Matthew Wolf, International President of the union, is expected to arrive here this morning to take charge of the situation.

Lester L. Jones, Executive Representative of the Publishers' Association of New York, gives out this statement:

"The daily newspaper publishers, seventeen in number, met the representatives of the union at 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon and, after long discussion, made the following statement in writing:

"Some time ago Photo Engravers' Union No. 1, whose members now receive minimum wages of \$45 for forty-four hours a week day work and \$60 for forty hours a week night work, presented a new scale contract to the newspaper publishers, demanding \$8 a week increase in wages, with added overtime charges above the price and a half now paid for all overtime, and they asked for a conference with the publishers.

"The publishers' committee and the union committee held the first conference last Friday, the 27th. The publishers then said, pending further negotiations, they would continue unchanged the highest wartime schedule of wages until further notice, and there was some discussion as to the period for which a new contract should be made, following the present contract, which expires June 1.

"The union committee said they would call a special meeting of the union to consider the publishers' suggestions, and the meeting adjourned, subject to the call of the Chairman for a further conference.

"The special meeting of the union, held on Sunday, reaffirmed the demand of the union for an \$8 per week increase in wages and a committee of the union asked for a further con-

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ference with the publishers, which the publishers immediately granted for next Thursday afternoon.

"At 10 o'clock yesterday the publishers were notified in writing, and for the first time, that the union had already 'taken action not to report for work on June 1 unless a new agreement was reached.'

"This sounds like an ultimatum. 'For twenty-five years we have dealt with the Photo Engravers' Union and all other unions in newspaper offices upon the same basis of written contracts, all agreements to be subject to negotiation at the termination of each contract, and, if no agreement could be reached by committees, to refer the matter to a court of arbitration, composed of disinterested persons selected by both sides, the decision of such arbitration court to be final and binding upon both sides. By this method we have worked together harmoniously for twenty-five years with all unions.

"If it is the intention of the Photo Engravers' Union to change this system without notice, to issue ultimatums to newspaper publishers, without negotiations, without a stated number of hours, there is only one answer that newspaper publishers can make. That answer is a definite and final refusal.

"If any member of the union thinks it can dictate terms by putting a pistol to our heads, he is grievously mistaken.

"It is much easier to rupture

friendly relations than to restore them afterward.

"If our contractual relations are now to be severed, it will be done by the union and not by the publishers. If you want co-operation, the highest wages, the best working conditions, you can preserve them for the future, as you have in the past.

"If there is to be a strike, it will be your strike, and the consequences rest with you.

"After this statement, a discussion of more than an hour ensued. The publishers reiterated their desire to operate closed union shops, their regret over any severance in relations, their willingness to continue the present scale of \$55 and \$60 weekly pending negotiations, with final arbitration if no agreement could be reached by conciliation and negotiation, any changes then effected to date from June 1.

"The newspaper publishers suggested that this proposal be submitted to the entire Photo Engravers' Union membership and an answer given to-day or Thursday.

"The union committee withdrew from the meeting to take this suggestion under advisement, and at 5:30 o'clock last night refused any form of arbitration and ordered a general strike. The commercial plants, whose scale is \$5 per week per man less than the newspaper scale, were not struck.

E. J. Volz, President of Photo-

Engravers' Union No. 1, issued a statement to-day giving the union's reasons for declaring the strike. Mr. Volz claims that the union submitted its demands for an increase in pay March 21, in compliance with a clause in the agreement with the publishers that either side desiring a change in the contract should give sixty days' notice. The publishers, Mr. Volz claims, repeatedly refused to meet a committee from the union, but caused to be printed in their papers accusations against the union of syndicalism, Sovietism, Bolshevism and Brindellism. "All such statements," declares Mr. Volz, "were unfounded and led our members to believe the publishers were not desirous of entering into a contract."

The statement continues that, after earnest endeavors to arrange a conference before the expiration of the contract on May 31, a committee of the publishers met a union committee last Friday. The publishers flatly refused to consider the union's demands for increased wages.

The union held a special meeting Sunday and voted to strike on June 1 unless a new agreement incorporating the increased wages should be entered into. The publishers, Mr. Volz charges, at first refused a conference between their committee and the committee from the union before the strike, on the ground that most of the committee members were out of town. The union, Mr. Volz says,

insisted, and the conference was held yesterday afternoon with nineteen representatives of the publishers in attendance—all the original committee but one.

The wage question, Mr. Volz asserts, was the only question in dispute. The publishers demanded arbitration. The union took the ground that if the publishers were sincere in their demand for arbitration, they would have availed themselves of it during the sixty days following the original demand of the union for increased wages.

The wage increase demand, according to Mr. Volz, is to bring the pay of newspaper workers up to that of workers in commercial establishments who are paid double for Saturday afternoon and holiday work and triple for Sunday work, while workers in newspaper offices receive only straight pay for Saturday afternoons, holidays and Sundays.

"Needless to say," concludes Mr. Volz, "we are looking forward to an early and satisfactory adjustment and regret that there should have been this breach."

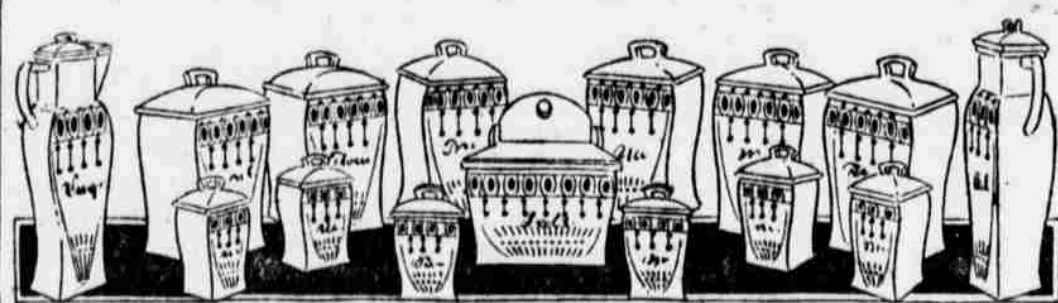
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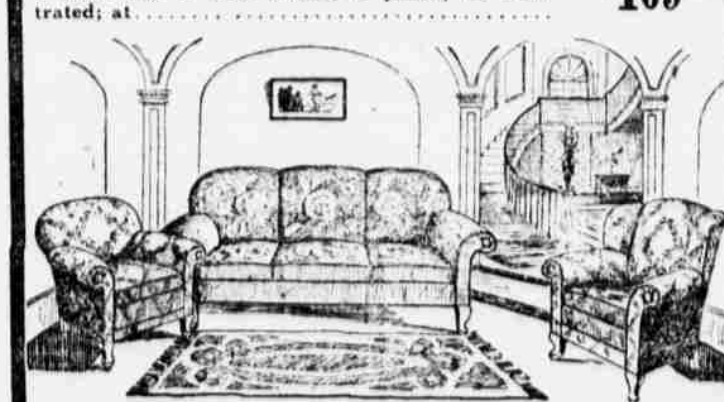
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